

Hey Tomorrow (Where Are You Goin') by osaki_nana_707

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Summary:

Fucking Harrington. Goddamn fucking Harrington and his goddamn fucking favors.

Harrington had promised one phone call, and he'd made that call, and Billy had shown up to this fucking diner, a diner for Christ's sakes, for an interview and the fucking Chief of Police comes walking in.

Or, Billy tries to get a job.

Hey Tomorrow (Where Are You Goin')

Author's Note:

please read the stories in order or some things may not make sense!

Hey Tomorrow (Where Are You Goin')

Billy's cursing Harrington's name as soon as he looks up and sees who walks in the door.

Fucking *Harrington*. Goddamn fucking *Harrington* and his goddamn fucking *favorites*.

Harrington had promised one phone call, and he'd made that call, and Billy had shown up to this fucking diner, a *diner* for Christ's sakes, for an interview and the fucking Chief of Police comes walking in.

At least he looks just as disappointed as Billy does in the whole situation.

Billy looks up at him, sitting there like a fucking idiot in his suit (he wore his own suit, he doesn't need to be over at Steve-fucking-Harrington's house playing dress-up, okay? He's *fine*), waiting to be interviewed with his resume and a cup of fucking black coffee. Billy's been doing his damndest to avoid police contact since he moved back to Hawkins, so he hasn't seen Hopper since he hauled ass out of town ten years ago when he'd been stopped right at the city limits and been given a speeding ticket that he never paid off. Hopper's grayer now, with more wrinkles around the eyes, but otherwise he looks the same. He's got the same uniform and the same expression—the one the says he's done with this whole situation and it hasn't even started. What was Steve even fucking thinking?

"Hey, chief," Billy says as casually as possible, leaning back in his booth, splaying an arm over the side. He smiles. It feels forced. It is

forced.

“Jesus Christ,” Hopper sighs, and Billy largely wants to agree with him. Hopper sits anyway, sliding into the booth across from him.

“Nice to see you too,” Billy says, picking up his coffee and taking a slow sip. “How’s tricks?”

“Everything’s as normal as it ever is,” Hopper says with the slightest turn to his lips, almost as if to say normal *isn’t* part of Hawkins’ vocabulary. Billy guesses that, as a cop, Hopper sees what little weird shit Hawkins has to offer, so maybe he thinks it’s different from every other fucking small town on earth when it isn’t. “You know, when Steve called me and asked me to interview a friend of his, I didn’t think it was going to be you. Didn’t know you and Steve were so uh... chummy.”

“Didn’t know you and Harrington were chummy either,” Billy says, setting his mug down. He’d rather have a cigarette, but the diner doesn’t allow smoking for some reason.

“I didn’t even know you lived here,” Hopper says, and Billy feels like that has to be bullshit. Word gets around fast in a small town like this, and he’s pretty sure Max still hangs out with her weird little friends from the “good ol’ days.” She probably told one of them at least that he was back in town. Even if she didn’t, Billy doesn’t tend to show up anywhere quietly. The Camaro’s engine still roars, and his radio dial still sits high.

He isn’t about to give the Chief of Police any lip today though, not right now at least. “Yep,” Billy says. “Maxine let me stay at her place while she’s at school as a favor.”

“Seems a lot of people are calling in favors for you,” Hopper says. Billy wants to spit a retort at him because even if Hopper didn’t mean it to be accusatory, like Billy doesn’t deserve any favors, it still feels accusatory. He can’t help himself. Billy’s fire still burns too bright no matter how much he tries to tamper it, and it always wants to make him go for the throat.

“Yep,” Billy says instead, lips popping on the ‘p’ sound. He’s still

gonna keep trying to control himself, damn it, if only to prove to Harrington that he can. “So what, you need a new deputy?”

“Secretary, actually,” Hopper says, and he looks amused, like it’s fucking hilarious to picture Billy in such a role. If Billy wasn’t the source of the ridicule, he’d probably agree. Because he is the one in the mental image, though, he doesn’t.

“Really,” Billy says flatly. It’s not a question.

Hopper nods. “My good gal Flo retired, and now I need some help with the office end of things. I’m not real good at the whole paperwork thing. I guess Steve thought you might be.”

“I guess Steve thought I was desperate.”

“Are you?”

There’s a beat of silence. Billy doesn’t like how known he feels in that moment, like Hopper can see right through him, like he can see that Billy had pop-tarts for dinner last night and that he’d lamented over buying the cup of coffee while he sat here waiting. Like he can see that the coffee is only lukewarm because Billy’s been drinking it as slow as possible. That Billy got here way too early because he had nowhere else to go. That Billy’s got nothing but this ugly ass suit and the hope that Harrington is better at coming through for people than Billy ever was. That he’d made deep promises on a ‘maybe’. Fuck.

When Billy doesn’t answer the question, Hopper sighs and motions towards Billy’s resume with his hand. Billy slides it over to him like he’s making a deal with a mob boss in a movie. Hopper takes it and starts perusing what little is on there. Billy had done his best to punch it up, but there’s only so much you can do with what’s there. He takes another sip of coffee. It tastes like garbage now, but at least it’s something on his stomach.

“Okay,” Hopper says after a minute, setting the paper down. Billy thinks he probably had to read that shit three times for as long as he took. “So, I take it you haven’t really done a lot of office work.”

“Nope.”

“What makes you think this is the job for you?”

“Harrington didn’t tell me what the job was.”

“Yeah, I sort of gathered that. I mean, this is an interview though. I’m supposed to ask like... bullshit interview questions, right? Then you’re supposed to give me bullshit answers. We shake hands and smile and we leave.”

Billy squints. “Uh.”

“It... feels stupid, right? It feels really stupid.”

Billy doesn’t say anything.

“Right, so,” Hopper says, briefly steepling his fingers before setting his hands down on the table. “Why don’t we just cut the bullshit. It’s not really my style. Why do you need this job?”

Billy sighs, chewing on the inside of his cheek. He doesn’t like the idea of telling this guy his weaknesses, doesn’t like to be seen as someone who even makes mistakes, even though all he’s ever done is fuck up. If he at least has the illusion of his shit together, that’s usually good enough... but it’s not just about him anymore, and he knows that. It hasn’t been for five years.

Hopper’s ordering a coffee from the waitress when Billy pulls his wallet out of his back pocket and flips looks through it until he finds it. It’s Katie’s school picture, taken just a couple of weeks ago. She’d asked him that morning if she could wear lipstick, and he’d used his last couple of bucks to let her buy a tube at the drugstore. It was bright red and matched her red dress perfectly. He helped her put it on in the front seat before sending her in. By the time the picture had been taken she’d smudged it some, but she was still beaming in it.

“That’s why,” Billy says, placing the picture on top of his resume with more care than he was used to using with anything.

Hopper stares down at the picture. He softens a little. Billy doesn’t know what to do with it.

“Your kid?” Hopper asks, and he even sound softer. Softer and...

sadder.

“She certainly ain’t anyone else’s,” Billy says. “She’s the spitting image of me, isn’t she?” Hopper looks from the picture back to Billy and then back to the picture again. “I just wanna take care of her, man.”

Now Billy sounds softer and sadder too and he hates it. He hates the part of himself that gets vulnerable. He’d tried to smoke it out, drink it out. He’d tried scaring it off with loud music. His dad had even tried to beat it out of him, but there it was, still lingering and pathetic. The sad, scared little boy. Fucking *Christ*.

“Steve’s kid is best friends with her,” Billy says, “So if you think Steve’s doing any of this as a favor to me, you’re wrong. He’s doing it for her. Kid’s gotta eat, y’know? Something other than pop-tarts and cereal. Look, if I were you, I wouldn’t fucking hire me to be honest. I get it. I’m a shit employee. I’ll probably roll up late once in a while, and I’ve got a fucking attitude problem... I’m working on that part, but yeah. There’s a reason I got fucking fired, alright? But I’m fucking trying. I’m trying to make sure that she has a better run of it than I did. She... she deserves a fucking chance to be more than a goddamn statistic, y’know?”

Hopper’s still looking at the picture, but his eyes are far away. He takes his coffee when the waitress brings it to him and takes a sip. “She reminds me of Sara,” he says softly. Billy doesn’t ask who it is, though he thinks maybe he should.

“What’s she like?” Hopper asks, handing the picture back.

“She’s... a good kid,” Billy says, not sure how to answer, “but a lot more like me than she should be. Likes Led Zeppelin. Tells kids off when they need to be told.”

“Now she sounds like Jane.”

Billy doesn’t know who that is either.

“So,” Hopper says, and he looks like he’s back in the present again. “You’re not really selling yourself to me, saying what a shit employee

you'd be."

"You were the one that said cut the bullshit, Chief," Billy says. "I'm not gonna sit here and beg you." Even though he had begged not to lose his previous job, a moment that still stung. "I'm not gonna feed you some sob story. If you don't wanna hire me then don't. I'll find something eventually."

It feels like a bluff. It kind of is. He already knows options are thin in Hawkins, and he's exhausted most of his resources. If this doesn't work, he's sure he'll have to drive out of town to find somewhere to work. The commute would be hard, he thinks, and he might not get to see much of Katie. He's starting to wonder if maybe that's better though. Maybe she needs to be around him less, be around Steve more. Steve seems to have this whole 'dad' thing figured out. Maybe he's just selfish for wanting to be around her all the time. He'd always been pretty selfish after all.

"What's her name? Your kid."

It's not the question Billy expects.

"Katie," Billy says, "Short for Katherine. After my mom."

Hopper scrubs a hand over his mouth thoughtfully. He reads Billy's resume again, Billy thinks. He doesn't know what he's looking for between the lines of text.

"Why don't you tell me what you *can* deliver if I gave you the job."

Billy straightens up a little.

Hopper gives him a long glance. "Kid, I can't just hire you out of pity, y'know. Steve called in a favor by having me interview you, not by me giving you the job. I don't need someone who is gonna "roll in late" or have a "fucking attitude problem." If you're fucking trying for her, you're gonna have to go the extra mile."

Billy sort of wants to laugh because it sounds like the same bullshit his teachers had fed him in school. Told him he was smart and would do better if he'd try harder.

“So?” Hopper pushes and when Billy stares at him, he sighs and says, “Tell me what you’re gonna bring to the table, Hargrove.”

It strikes Billy with sudden, drenching clarity. This is his last chance. He really is fucked if Hopper won’t give him this job. He’s a pathetic piece of shit with a shit suit and a shit resume and *no one* is going to hire him *anywhere*. He *needs* this stupid job or Katie’s going to suffer. Katie’s going to suffer because her deadbeat fucking dad fucking *sucks*—

Shit.

Shit, shit, he feels the tears welling up in his eyes, and he has to swallow them down with every bit of strength he’s got left in him... and fuck, it’s not that much strength. He’s so fucking tired.

“I’ll show up on time,” Billy says, staring at the table. His voice is low and wobbling. It feels like one of the conversations he’d had with his dad after he’d been whittled down to raw nerve and was too tired and hurt to keep fighting. All of his conversations with his dad ended up like that. It was probably really funny, Big Bad Billy Hargrove on the floor, all small and broken. It would be funny, at least, if it wasn’t so sad. “I’ll be on my best behavior. I’ll do whatever you want me to do, and I won’t bitch about it.”

He’d said he wouldn’t fucking beg, but he sort of is. He can feel it in the heat of his face, the shame.

“You still smoke?” Hopper asks.

Hopper’s really good at asking questions Billy hasn’t anticipated. He wonders if it’s a Cop Interrogation Technique or whatever, put him off his game and see what he blurts out.

“Yeah,” Billy says softly.

“I quit,” Hopper says. “I did it for my kid. If you work for me, you’re gonna have to quit too. I don’t need that smell around my office.”

“And?”

“And that’s it. If you show up on time and do your job and quit the

cigarettes then I don't see any reason not to hire you."

Billy's lips part. He's done a lot of not talking in this interview, but this time he's actually speechless. It takes him over a minute before he can shake it off. "You... wanna hire me?"

"I don't see why not. You could be useful. Could stand to have someone around the office that knows something about cars and can throw a punch. Maybe if you do well around there you can get into training and actually end up a deputy, if you want." Hopper pauses, resting the rim of his mug against his lips for a moment, then taking a swallow of coffee. "You look like a guy who needs someone to give you a break," he continues, "and you sound like you're willing to put in the work. If you prove yourself then great. If you fuck it up, then we'll figure out where to go from there."

Billy doesn't cry, but it's a close thing. He can feel it pressing against the back of his eyes, can feel it curling in his throat. It's stupid and pathetic and he hates himself, hates how he sits under Hopper's gaze, so grateful for his approval when he doesn't deserve it.

"Give it your best, kid," Hopper says. "Do it for her." He gets up from the table, tosses some money on the table. It's more than his coffee is worth by a lot. "Get you some lunch. I'll see you on Monday."

Billy's not ashamed to admit it's the best goddamn cheeseburger he's ever eaten.

He's also not ashamed when he looks up Steve's number in the phonebook and calls him on the payphone in the diner and leaves a message on his answering machine.

All he says is, "Hey, it's me... um... thank you."

Harrington and his fucking favors.

Author's Note:

I'm on [tumblr](#).